



**Montana Fish,  
Wildlife & Parks**



**Indian Education Division**  
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## Beavertail Hill State Park Indian Education For All Lesson Plan

### Title

What's in a Name?

### Content Area(s)

Social Studies; Media Literacy

### Grade level

4<sup>th</sup>

### Duration

45 minutes to 1 hour

### Goals (Montana Standards/Essential Understandings)

**Essential Understanding 1:** There is great diversity among the 12 tribal Nations of Montana in their languages, cultures, histories and governments. Each Nation has a distinct and unique cultural heritage that contributes to modern Montana.

**Social Studies Content Standard 4:** Students demonstrate an understanding of the effects of time, continuity, and change on historical and future perspectives and relationships.

**Speaking and Listening Content Standard 4:** Students identify, analyze, and evaluate the impacts of effective speaking and evaluative listening.

**Reading Content Standard 5:** Students gather, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information from a variety of sources, and communicate their findings in ways appropriate for their purposes and audiences

### Overview

In this lesson plan students will use information provided and gathered from various sources to discover why places have the names they have. Beavertail Hill, for example was named because the natural feature (the hill) resembled the tail of a beaver. It should be noted that Interstate 90's construction, sliced through the "beaver's tail"! Students will have the opportunity to compare modern names with the names given by Native American people. Some of the Native names predate modern names by thousands of years.

### Objectives

The students will learn:

- Why names are given to certain natural features, communities, etc.
- Native people had names for many of the features of western Montana, most of these names have been replaced by modern names. Native people often continue to recognize these areas by their traditional names.

Students will develop skill in these areas:

- Mapping, analysis, comparison, making decisions and drawing conclusions

### Assumptions

The lesson plan assumes students have an understanding about their local area. This understanding should include knowledge of local communities and natural features, their locations as well as their names.

### Teacher Preparation

- Teacher should become familiar with the following resources:
  - Cheney, R. (1983). *Names on the Face of Montana*. Missoula, MT: Mountain Press Publishing (available at most school/public libraries)
  - *Selected Montana Place Names – Native origins* (included in lesson plan)

### Materials or Resources Needed

- Cheney, R. (1983). *Names on the Face of Montana*. Missoula, MT: Mountain Press Publishing (available at most school/public libraries)
- *Selected Montana Place Names – Native origins* (included in lesson plan)
- *Montana Highway Map*
- Student notebooks, pencils/pens, paper, classroom board
- Computers, Internet, Word Processing program
  - Internet access to the following website.  
<http://www.behindthename.com/nmc/eng.php>

### Activities

#### Warm up

Ask students if they know anything about their own personal or family names, first and last. *Who named them? Were they named after other family members, celebrities, places, etc?* Ask the students, “*If you could choose a new name for yourself, what would it be?*” Have them think of special characteristics or talents they each might possess.

Refer to the Internet resource (<http://www.behindthename.com/nmc/eng.php>) to discover the meaning of certain names.

#### Learning

Using the Montana Highway map, or a large classroom Montana map, ask the students to locate *pre-selected* communities. (*the teacher should pick no more than five, some obviously native.. Kalispell for example; some referring to a natural feature, Butte..and a personal name, Stevensville*) Ask them to speculate on the reason for the names. (Refer to Cheney, R. (1983) *Names on the Face of*

**Montana . Missoula, MT: Mountain Press Publishing book to provide background. )**

Break the students up in smaller groups (teacher's preference as to size). Using the *Selected Montana Place Names - Native Origins* document, ask the groups to identify and locate five of the listed places on the Montana Highway Map. When these are located, have the students discuss, in their respective groups, why these places are so named. The teacher might ask each group to share with the class why they believe it has the name. Share with the students the native origins of the name. Were they surprised? Was the Native description accurate? Did it help them to understand why the selected places were named the way they are? This activity is designed to demonstrate that Native people were aware of their environment, interacted with the environment, and named certain areas based on their experience with the environment.

## **Extensions**

**Check out these great books to learn more about Salish and Kootenai people.**

*Coyote stories of the Montana Salish Indians* by Johnny Arlee  
Salish Kootenai College Press , 1999.

*Stories From our Elders*  
Salish Culture Committee Publications

*In the Name of the Salish & Kootenai Nation*  
Bigart,, Robert, Clarence Woodcock ed. Salish Kootenai College Press 1996

**Invite a Salish-Kootenai Tribal Member to your classroom to learn about tribal history, language and place names.**

## **EVALUATION:**

Discussion/observation

Participation

Classroom presentation

**Selected Montana Place Names – Native origins** – (please note that the term Flathead is used primarily to refer to the Salish and/or Kootenai people. Also whenever possible, tribal specific names are used, occasionally the generic term “Indian” is used)

<b><i>Council Grove State Park</i></b>	Missoula	Council Grove State Park commemorates “the place of tall trees with no limbs,” where tribes of western Montana reluctantly gave up most of their homeland 150 years ago. Like those of other ancients nearby, the pine’s lower limbs have long rotted and broken off. In the Salish language, this site along the Clark Fork River, 10 miles west of Missoula, is known as chilmeh—“the place of tall trees with no limbs.”
<b><i>Lolo</i></b>	Missoula	In Nez Perce language Lolo means "muddy water". According to Judge Woody Lolo is an Indian rendition of the word Lawrence, name of an old trapper. Maybe a corruption of La Louis, name given the creek by trappers.  The Salish name of the stream was 'Tum-sum-lech,' meaning 'salmonless,' or 'no salmon.' In all of the creeks and rivers across the range, the Clearwater, and its several branches, has an abundance of salmon, but none were ever found in the Lolo, hence the name.
<b><i>Missoula</i></b>	Missoula	A city & county, the name said to be;1) a Salish Indian word meaning "the river of awe" Duncan McDonald says it means "sparkling water",2) Contraction of Flathead word meaning "by place of ambush or fear". (or) Salish say the name means “River of the Bull Trout”
<b><i>Plains</i></b>	Sanders	A town formerly called Horse Plains. It was originally a wintering place for native people and their horses. Later, stockmen from as far as Walla Walla, WA drove their horse there to winter. "Horse" was dropped years ago.
<b><i>Pondera</i></b>	Pondera	Originally Pend d'Oreille [ear pendent]; the name was changed to a form resembling the phonetic spelling to avoid confusion with the town and lake by same name in Idaho.
<b><i>Red Lodge</i></b>	Carbon	County seat. Two Versions;1)First White settlers called the locality by this name because the Crow Indians had inhabited the area, 2) Town was named for an Indian medicine man
<b><i>Sleeping Child Creek</i></b>	Ravalli	A creek named by the Indians & is said to have been Weeping Child originally, because of a child left there by its mother
<b><i>Stinking Water Creek</i></b>	Beaverhead	A creek that flows into Beaverhead River near Twin Bridges. Native people of the area described the area as "stinking water" - caused by sulfurous drainage
<b><i>Tongue River</i></b>	Rosebud	A river named by the Crow & Cheyenne Indians
<b><i>Victor</i></b>	Ravalli	A town named for Chief Victor of the Salish.
<b><i>Other sites of interest</i></b>		
<b><i>Bison</i></b>	Glacier	A station on the Great Northern Railway, Glacier County, Montana. So named because of the large herds of bison roaming in that vicinity in the early days

<b><i>Blackfoot</i></b>	Glacier	A village in Glacier County, Montana. It was named from the Blackfoot Indian tribe of Indians
<b><i>Medicine Lake</i></b>	Sheridan	A town in Sheridan County, Montana. This town takes its name from nearby Medicine Lake, a body of water so named by the native people because they found many of their medicinal herbs and roots around its shores and because the water itself had medicinal qualities.
<b><i>Painted Robe</i></b>	Golden Valley	A station on the Great Northern Railway, in Golden Valley County, Montana. This name was derived from the fact that the Indians, while hunting and trapping in the vicinity, painted their robes at this place, using a certain kind of clay available in the creek bed
<b><i>Plentywood</i></b>	Sheridan	A town in Sheridan County, Montana. During frontier days the surrounding region, particularly along the creek bearing the same name, was thickly wooded. The area was once prime hunting grounds for the Assiniboines. When cattlemen arrived, they referred to the locality as "that place where there is plenty wood." It is easy to understand why the name "Plentywood" was adopted when the first post office was established there.
<b><i>Red Eagle</i></b>	Flathead	A station on the Great Northern Railway in Flathead County, Montana. This locality was so named in honor of a prominent chief of the Blackfoot tribe of Indians.
<b><i>Spotted Robe</i></b>	Glacier	A station on the Great Northern Railway, in Glacier County, Montana. The station was first named "Kilroy," but on February 7, 1926, the present name was substituted in honor of a former chief of the Blackfoot tribe of Indians.
<b>Ambrose Creek</b>		Named for Ambrose Amelo, a Flathead Chief, according to the published journal and letters of Major John Owen.
<b>Bitterroot River Valley, Mountains, Flower and Forest</b>		<p>The river had several names before the name 'Bitter Root' or 'Bitterroot' was adopted. Lewis and Clark named it 'Clark's River' on September 6, 1805, after Captain William Clark. Alexander Ross's journal, dated 1824, called it 'Courtine's Fork of the Piegan River.' The Jesuit Missionaries called it the 'St. Mary's River' in the late 1840's. The 1863 survey of the John Owen Donation Claim by DeLacy shows 'Bitter Root River.' The General Land Office survey plats use both 'Bitter Root' and 'St. Mary's' on different plats. W.H. Baker's 1870 survey of T12N, R20W, shows 'Bitter Root River.' George W. Irvine's and Henry C. Rodleder's 1872 surveys of townships include the name 'St. Mary's Fork of the Bitter Root River,' but Henry C. Rodleder shows it as 'Bitter Root River' in his survey of T6N, R20W. Later surveys used the name 'Bitter Root.' The Salish Indian name for the Bitter Root River is 'Spitlem seukn.' The valley was named for the river.</p> <p>The Bitter Root flower was named by Lewis and Clark. Wheeler says of the Bitter Root in 1898, "A beautiful flower, a beautiful river, a valley, a magnificent range-such is the Bitter Root." The flower is a small plant that blooms in May or June, and is common to many of the Montana valleys. It seems to thrive more especially in the Bitter Root Valley, and this circumstance has given the valley its name. The petals are of a beautiful delicate pink or rose color; the root is edible, and was formerly much-used by Indians and mountaineers for food, although it is very bitter. Native people dry it, and in this condition it will keep for years. The botanical name of the plant is 'Lewisian redivina,' after Captain Lewis (who collected it in 1806); the Shoshone Indians, Granville Stuart says, call it 'Konah;' the Flathead or Salish Indians characterize it by the word, 'Spitlem.'</p>
<b>Skalkaho Creek</b>		Skalkaho means 'many roads' in the Salish language.

<b>Salmon River, Idaho</b>	The Shoshone called it 'Tom-Agit-Pak,' or 'Big Fish Water.'
<b>Sweathouse Creek</b>	The name dates prior to 1872. It was a favorite site for the Salish Indians to camp and build sweat houses; hence, the name.
<b>AKOKALA CREEK (Lake)</b>	Kootenai name meaning "rotten." The creek was formerly known as "Indian Creek," and the lake as "Oil Lake."
<b>BELLY RIVER</b>	The Blackfeet people had a custom of apportioning the anatomy of Napi all over the landscape. His elbow was the Bow River at Calgary. His knees were the Teton Buttes. Midway lay his stomach, and what more appropriate than the aforementioned buttes, which to the Indian resembled the contorted manifold of a buffalo. Hence, they became Mokowanis, or Big Belly Buttes. The river that flowed at their base became Mokowanis River, and later, when Indians from Algonquin nations of the southeast drifted into the region, and established themselves along the river, these too, became Mokowanis.
<b>CARCAJOU LAKE</b>	Named for a mythical being of the Cree Indians, meaning "hungry," or "eats a lot," and from which the English word "carcajou," for wolverine, is derived
<b>CHIEF MOUNTAIN</b>	There are many legends regarding this mountain, the most popular being that of the young Flathead Indian brave who spent several days on the top of the peak searching for his "medicine vision," and using a bison skull for a pillow. When Henry L. Stimson, later Secretary of State, and his companions first climbed to the top of this mountain in 1892, they were probably the first white men to do so. There they found an ancient bison skull almost entirely decomposed, giving considerable authenticity to this popular legend.  The present name was taken from the Blackfeet Indian name "Old Chief," or "The Mountain-of-the-Chief," by which it was known to the Blackfeet, probably because of the above-mentioned legend.
<b>KAKITOS MOUNTAIN</b>	Kakitos is the Blackfeet name for star. The mountain often resembles a three-pointed star.
<b>KINTLA LAKE (Creek, Glacier, Peak)</b>	The only explanation for this name is found in a reported legend of the Kootenai Indians, to whom the word "kintla" means "sack." It is reported by the older Indians that in the olden days in their hunting, camping and visiting trips they would cross the mountains near this point, but would never go near the water because it had been reported that one of the Indians had gone to this lake and had fallen in and disappeared, meaning that he was drowned and his body did not come back.
<b>ST. MARY LAKE (Falls, River)</b>	The Piegan Indians called these lakes the "Walled-in Lakes," while the Kootenai Indians called them "Old Woman Lakes."
<b>SINOPAH MOUNTAIN</b>	Sinopah, meaning "kit fox" in Blackfeet

**SIYEH, MT.**  
**(Creek,**  
**Glacier, Pass)**

"Sai-yeh," in Blackfeet means Crazy Dog, or Mad Wolf